



Morning Alert - Friday, March 16, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, TBS and TV Asahi led with reports on the growing criticism of the Finance Ministry's doctoring of documents related to the sale of state-owned land to Moritomo Gakuen. NTV led with a report that a pedestrian bridge at Florida International University collapsed and crushed eight cars, killing several people according to NBC. Fuji TV reported on updates on the alleged harassment of Olympic wrestling champion Kaori Icho by her coach.

Top stories in national dailies included reports on the Moritomo Gakuen document scandal (Asahi, Mainichi); plans by the GOJ and five major power companies to establish a panel to discuss the joint construction and operation of the Higashidori Nuclear Power Plant in Aomori (Yomiuri); a GOJ plan to allow commercial drones to deliver packages in remote areas this summer (Nikkei); and suspected massive cyberattacks on South Korean government entities and major firms in February and March by hacker groups connected to North Korea (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

Abductees' families mull U.S. visit

Sankei front-paged a report claiming that the families of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea are exploring the possibility of visiting the United States in late April to directly ask senior U.S. government officials for cooperation in resolving the abduction issue. The paper speculated that the families are hoping to ask the officials to explain the seriousness of the abductions to President Trump ahead of his possible meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un by May.

Japan, South Korea hold security dialogue

Asahi wrote that Japan and South Korea held a working-level security dialogue in Tokyo on

Thursday. According to the paper, the two nations agreed to conduct policy coordination with the United States to urge North Korea to take concrete actions to denuclearize. The paper also wrote that Japan apparently asked South Korea to help evacuate Japanese nationals in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula. A GOJ source reportedly said that the two nations also agreed to maintain the pressure campaign against the DPRK and confirmed South Korea's plan to conduct joint military drills with the United States. Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei ran similar reports.

DPRK foreign minister to visit Sweden

Yomiuri wrote that the Foreign Ministry of Sweden announced on Thursday that North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho will visit Sweden on March 15-16 to hold talks with his Swedish counterpart Wallstrom to discuss denuclearization and other issues. The paper speculated that Ri may ask Sweden to deliver a message to the United States in connection with an envisaged U.S.-DPRK summit that may take place by May.

ECONOMY

President Trump comments on Japan auto market access at Missouri event

NTV reported this morning on a speech that President Trump delivered on Wednesday at a meeting in Missouri that was closed to the press. According to an audio recording of his speech obtained by NBC, the President used a safety test that is not performed in Japan as an example of a non-tariff barrier to U.S. cars' entry to the Japanese market. The President was quoted as saying: "They take a bowling ball 20 feet up in the air and drop it on the hood of a car, and when the hood dents, the car is unqualified. It's horrible." The network said that the President's remarks could cause a stir.

SECURITY

Japan Coast Guard sends papers to prosecutors on collision involving USS Fitzgerald

Asahi, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that the Japan Coast Guard filed papers with prosecutors at the Shizuoka District Court on Thursday on the collision between the USS Fitzgerald and a Philippine-flagged container ship off the Izu Peninsula in Shizuoka Prefecture last June. The Coast Guard has accused an officer aboard the USS Fitzgerald and a navigation officer on the container ship of professional negligence resulting in death.

Family of murdered Okinawa woman has yet to receive compensation

Asahi front-paged a report saying that it has learned from several GOJ sources that concerning the murder of a Japanese woman in Uruma, Okinawa, in April 2016, her family has not yet received court-ordered compensation from the man who murdered her, Kenneth Franklin Shinzato, because of his inability to pay. According to the paper, the U.S. government has no plan to pay the compensation despite the system under the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement that allows victims to file claims for compensation with the U.S. government for crimes involving U.S. military

and related personnel. Although Shinzato was a civilian worker at a U.S. military installation at the time of the incident, he was not directly hired by the U.S. military. The paper wrote that although the family is planning to ask the U.S. government to pay the compensation, the U.S. government does not plan to heed the request on the grounds that Shinzato was not a direct hire of the U.S. military.

SOCIETY

Supreme Court rules against mother's failure to comply with Hague Convention

Yomiuri front-paged a report saying that the Supreme Court on Thursday made its first decision on a case in which a child has not been returned despite a finalized Japanese court order to do so based on the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The top court ruled in favor of a U.S.-based father seeking the return of his 13-year-old son who was brought to Japan by his mother, overturning a lower court ruling against the father's request. The Supreme Court's First Petty Branch said that it sees "clear illegality" in the mother's failure to comply with the order. Asahi, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei ran similar inside-page reports.

